

## Message Text

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11  
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-07 OES-06 INT-05

COME-00 AGR-05 STR-04 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00

/072 W

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R 070700Z AUG 76  
FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1410  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN  
AMCONSUL CASABLANCA  
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: EFIS, LI, UR, PL  
SUBJECT: SOVIET FISH SALES IN LIBERIA

REF: STATE A-425

1. RFA FOLSOM AND COMMATT PORTER MET WITH KEITH BRADSHAW, OUTGOING (LEAVING LIBERIA AUGUST 15) PRESIDENT OF MESURADO GROUP OF COMPANIES, AUGUST 3. VISIT FOLLOWED RFA'S EARLIER MEETING WITH STEPHEN N. CARROLL, (BRITISH) VP FINANCE WHO REPLACING BRADSHAW AS PRESIDENT. MEETING WITH BRADSHAW INFORMATIVE RE SOVIET FISH SALES IN CONTRAST TO THAT WITH CARROLL AND OTHER MESURADO FISHING CO. (MESUFISH) OFFICIALS WHO EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS SOVIET FISH SALES. OTHER EMPLOYEES SIMPLY REFUSED TO DICUSS TOPIC. COMMENT: OVER YEARS EMBASSY HAS HAD DIFFICULTY ELICITING RELATED INFORMATION AND GENERAL BUSINESS INFORMATION FROM MESURADO. WHILE BRADSHAW HAS ALWAYS BEEN REASONABLY RESPONSIVE TO EMBASSY INQUIRIES,  
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HIS PARTICULAR OPENESS ON THIS VISIT MAY IN PART BE DUE TO

FACT THAT HE SHORTLY LEAVING LIBERIA AND ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF COMPANY (ALTHOUGH HE WILL REMAIN ON MESURADO BOARD AFTER HIS RETURN TO THE UK). END COMMENT.

2. BRADSHAW APPARENTLY HAS GOOD WORKING RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS AND HAS MADE A NUMBER OF VISITS TO MOSCOW. ACTUAL CONTRACT TALKS ARE HELD WITH PRODINTORG IN MONROVIA. BRADSHAW HAS HIGH REGARD FOR SOVIET NEGOTIATORS AND INDICATED THAT ALTHOUGH THEY VERY HARD BARGAINERS THEY GOOD TO DEAL WITH BECAUE ONCE AGREEMENTS SIGNED SOVIETS ALWAYS LIVE UP TO LETTER OF CONTRACT. HE ALSO FELT THAT SOVIETS OFFER MESUFISH RATHER FAVORABLE TERMS (RELATIVE TO SOME OTHER WEST AFRICAN CUSTOMERS) BECAUSE MESUFISH IS AS METICULOUS IN ITS DEALINGS AS SOVIETS ARE AND THEREFORE ALWAYS RELAIABLE.

3. MESUFISH PAYS FROM \$240/TON FOR MACKERAL TO \$400/T FOR OTHER SPECIES OF FISH, INCLUDING SEABREAMS AND SNAPPERS. PRICES, HOWEVER, AVERAGE ABOUT \$300/T. APPARENTLY MESUFISH INSPECTORS BOARD VESSELS AND INSPECT CATCH, SELECTING ONLY HIGHEST QUALITY. L/C IN U.S. DOLLARS IS THEN ISSUED.

4. MESUFISH FLEET MANAGER STATED SOVIET VESSELS TIE UP AT MESU DOCKS AND UNLOAD DIRECTLY INTO FLEET OF TRUCKS WHICH TAKE CATCH TO COLD STORES. FISH LATER THAWED, WASHED, DIVIDED INTO SPECIES, BOXED IN TWO (10) KG. BOXES, REFROZEN AND THEN SHIPPED TO INLAND DEPOTS.

5. MESUFISH ALSO BUYS SOVIET-LANDED FISH IN SIERRA LEONE FOR SHIPMENT TO LIBERIA.

6. RFA NOTED THAT GOL IMPORT STATISTICS DO NOT LIST USSR AS EXPORTING FISH TO LIBERIA. CARROLL INDICATED THAT MESUFISH "CHARTERS" VESSELS, THUS SOVIET-CAUGHT FISH PRESUMABLY LISTED AS DOMESTIC CATCH. VALUE FIGURES OBVIOUSLY THUS ALSO HIDDEN. COMMENT: MESUFISH HAS ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN TO BE PROFIT LEADER IN MESURADO GROUP, AND APPARENTLY IT CONTINUING TO LEAD IN YEAR GENERALLY GOOD FOR GROUP. BRADSHAW CONFIRMED EARLIER INDICATION TO COMMATT THAT WHILE GROUP TURNED PROFIT OF APPROX. \$1.2 MILLION FOR 1975, FIRST HALF PROFITS (GENERALLY WEAKEST HALF FOR MESURADO) ARE OVER \$2 MILLION THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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YEAR. BRADSHAW ADMITTED THAT GROUP HAD "BAD" SEVERAL YEARS JUST PRIOR AND AFTER STEPHEN TOLBERT'S DEATH, BUT THAT IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED HEALTHY RECOVERY AND NOW ON SOUND BASIS. END COMMENT.

7. CARROLL, MORE THAN BRADSHAW, EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN ABOUT OVER-RELIANCE ON LOW-PRICED SOVIET-CAUGHT FISH. HE INDICATED MESUFISH'S INLAND SALES THROUGH DEPOT NETWORK WOULD

BE BADLY UPSET IF SOVIETS WERE TO SUDDENLY HALT SALES TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC GOALS, SUCH AS PERMISSION TO FISH LOCAL WATERS (WHICH THEY DO NOT NOW HAVE). CARROLL NOTED ABRUPT HALT OF SOVIET FISH SALES IN BIDJAN TEN MONTHS AGO AS EXAMPLE.

8. BRADSHAW AWARE OF PROBLEMS AND HOPES TO COUNTER RELIANCE ON USSR BY ESTABLISHING JOINT VENTURE TRAWL FISHERY WITH UK OR ROK PARTNERS. AT SAME TIME UNEXPLAINABLY BRADSHAW INDICATED HE HAS HELD DETAILED TALKS WITH SOVIETS ABOUT FORMING 50-50 JOINT FISHING VENTURE (WHICH HE SOMEWHAT WHIMSICALLY CALLED "MESUFLOT"). ONLY MAJOR OBSTACLE APPEARS TO BE SOVIET RELUCTANCE TO USE LIBERIAN CREW TO OVERSEE OPERATION. MESUFISH HAS ALSO ENGAGED IN DISCUSSIONS AND PLANS TO START BUYING FISH FROM POLISH TRAWLERS IN NEAR FUTURE.

9. ALSO OF NOTE IS BRADSHAW'S STATEMENT THAT SOVIETS HAVE SHOWN GREAT INTEREST IN SHRIMPING OPERATIONS, PRESSING HIM FOR DETAILS ON FISHERY AND MARKETS. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH COMMATT, BRADSHAW HAS BECOME RATHER HEATED IN CONDEMNING SOVIET INROADS INTO SIERRA LEONE FISHING GROUNDS. HE FEELS SL HAS QTE SOLD ITS BIRTHRIGHT FOR A MESS OF POTTAGE UNTE. HE DOES NOT SEE SOVIET FISHING RIGHTS IN SL WATERS AS THREAT TO MESUFISH'S ACCESS TO THOSE WATERS (PRESIDENTO TOLBRT MAJOR SHAREHOLDER IN MESURADO AND HAS SPECIAL PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SL PRESIDENT SIACA STEPHENS), BUT FEELS SOVIET OVERFISHING THERE UNCONSCIONABLE AND WILL HAVE ADVERSE EFFECT ON OTHER WEST AFRICAN WATERS. HE NOTED STRONG INTEREST IN DIRECT DEALING WITH GOL ON FISHING, AND INDICATED USSR HAS MADE PROPOSAL TO TRAIN LOCAL NATIVE FISHERMEN, A SCHEME WHEREBY SOME 25-30 SOVIET "TECHNICIANS" WOULD BE STATIONED ALONG LIBERIA'S COAST. HE INDICATED THAT GOL CERTAINLY DOESN'T WANT THIS, AND THAT IT IS DEFINITELY NOT IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MESU INTEREST TO UPGARDE CAPABILITY OF LOCAL FISHERMEN.

10. RFA FEELS THAT CARROLL, WHO SHOWS GREATER CONCERN OVER SOVIETS, MAY INFLUENCE MESURADO AWAY FROM CLOSE TIES INITIATED BY BRADSHAW, ALTHOUGH FISH PURCHASES WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE. FISHING JOINT-VENTURE, HOWEVER, PROBABLY WILL BE WITH UK OR ROK PARTNERS.

11. ABIDJAN MAY WISH TO CONFIRM REPORTED HALT IN SOVIET DELIVERIES OF FISH WITHIN PAST TEN MONTHS AND POSSIBLY DETERMINE IF POLITICAL PRESSURE MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED.  
HORAN

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